

# DRAFT

## Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services Gambling-Free Policy Guidelines January 2005

The Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) is instituting the attached guidelines for the establishment of written gambling-free policies in all BSAS-funded programs. The BSAS Terms and Conditions and Standards of Care require that BSAS-funded programs comply with gambling-free policy guidelines.

### RATIONALE:

It is currently estimated that approximately 5% of the general adult population will have a gambling disorder in their lifetime. While that percentage equates to approximately 250,000 Massachusetts residents, the prevalence rates within populations of people who live with substance use disorders and other mental health disorders jump to between 25 and 40%. Similarly, approximately 50% of people with gambling disorders will identify as also having a substance use disorder within their lifetime. As Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) contracted agencies that currently serve these populations, it is necessary to be aware of and prepared to address gambling disorders within all treatment settings of all modalities.

Beyond the strong evidence that gambling problems exist among the populations served by BSAS providers, recent research has found that gambling disorders and substance use disorders share many similarities and exist under the same conceptual framework as addictive behaviors.

Both disorders are characterized by cravings and uncontrollable urges; continued involvement despite adverse social, psychological, and/or physiological consequences; and a sense of loss of control of one's behavior. Many people experiencing a problem with their gambling or substance use have difficulty trying to stop, managing depression and mood swings, handling their preoccupation with the addiction and feelings of low self-esteem. In addition, most people find that they have an increased tolerance with use and withdrawal symptoms when stopped. Both will often chase an early high or win, use the behavior to escape pain, and be unable to see the connection between their use and problems it creates. Both disorders have been identified as progressive and both can have a negative impact on family life and work life, in addition to the individual.

While the two are quite similar, it is also important to point out the differences between substance use and gambling disorders to distinguish the needs of each in the treatment setting. As a gambling disorder is not a tissue-based addiction, and often is difficult to diagnose, some call the disorder the "invisible addiction." In addition, gambling as an activity is known to be a highly efficient provider of intermittent rewards; while this random reinforcement makes gambling fun for most people, it leads people with gambling disorders to pursue the fantasy of a big win to desperation and destruction. These differences emphasize the need of clinical providers to be sensitive to triggers in the treatment environment and equip themselves with the clinical tools that will help them to screen,

assess and treat gambling disorders. To this end, BSAS requests that all BSAS contracted agencies establish written gambling-free policies in compliance with the following guidelines and that they strongly consider further training and technical assistance on this issue.

#### REFERENCES:

American Psychiatric Association. *American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV*. Washington, DC: 1994.

National Gambling Impact Study Commission: *National Gambling Impact Study Commission Report*. Washington, DC: National Gambling Impact Study Commission, June 1999.

Shaffer, Howard et al. Estimating the Prevalence of Disordered Gambling in the United States and Canada: A Meta-Analysis. Harvard Medical School, Division on Addictions. Boston, MA: 1997.

Shaffer, Howard and Korn, David. "Gambling and Related Mental Health Disorders: A Public Health Analysis," *Annual Review of Public Health*, 23 (2002): 171-212.

#### RESOURCES:

The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a statewide non-profit agency dedicated to helping people with gambling problems in the Commonwealth. The Council provides information, education, advocacy and referral services, including a 24 hour, 7 days a week Helpline (1.800.426.1234). More information on the agency can be found on the web at [www.masscompulsivegambling.org](http://www.masscompulsivegambling.org).

Harvard Medical School's Division on Addictions publishes research related to gambling disorders and other addictive disorders. Dr. Howard Shaffer and others have provided access to those publications and helpful clinical tools on their website—[www.hms.harvard.edu/da](http://www.hms.harvard.edu/da)

American Academy of Health Care Providers in the Addictive Disorders is an organization that offers a national certification for clinicians in problem gambling (CAS). For more information, visit their website at [www.americanacademy.org](http://www.americanacademy.org)

The National Council on Compulsive Gambling offers a national Helpline number that will route anyone with a gambling problem to the council in the state where they are calling. The Helpline number is 1.800. 522.4700. In addition, they offer a national certification for clinicians in problem gambling (NCGC). More information can be found on their website at [www.ncpgambling.org](http://www.ncpgambling.org).

The BASIS: Brief Addiction Science Information Source, is a weekly online publication that provides the general public, treatment providers, policy makers, and other interested individuals with free direct access to the latest scientific information and resources on addiction. The BASIS website includes *The Wager*, a weekly update devoted to examining the clinical, economic, legal, and social dimensions of problem gambling, that was formerly published separately. The BASIS can be sent to an email account through a simple registration process. This can be found at [www.basisonline.org](http://www.basisonline.org).

Effective Date:
Reviewed/Revised:
Approved By:

## **DRAFT Gambling-Free Policy Guidelines**

### **Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services Gambling-Free Policy Guidelines for all DPH/BSAS Provider Agencies**

**Policy:** All BSAS funded substance abuse programs must have written policies that ensure a healthy environment for all clients with addictions and mental health disorders, including those who have experienced a problem with their gambling behavior. In agreement with the RFR requirements of 2003, all agencies contracting with BSAS are expected to adhere to the BSAS gambling-free guidelines.

To establish the policies regarding gambling behaviors, it is important that each agency use the same operational definition of gambling. The definition that the Mass. Council on Compulsive Gambling has chosen is, "...risking something of value on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning is less than certain" (Korn and Shaffer, 1999). Common forms of gambling to consider are:

- lottery games (scratch tickets, Keno, numbers games)
- pari-mutuel (horse and dog races, jai lai)
- casinos (table games and slot machines)
- sports betting (office or family pools and/or with a bookie)
- bingo or beano
- raffles and fundraising tickets
- internet gambling of any type
- day trading
- animal fights
- betting on individual skills
- electronic gaming devices
- any card, video, board, or other games for money

Policies must at least include the following:

- **Illegal wagering:** Illegal wagering, just as any other illegal activities, cannot take place on the premises. Illegal wagering is defined as any wagering, betting or gambling that does not meet the parameters of the law. Illegal wagering can include betting with a bookie, betting in office pools with a cut of all money wagered given to the organizer, and illegal machines
- **Staff conduct:**
  - Agency-organized trips with clients are not permitted to gambling establishments. Trips that are not permitted may include trips to casinos, bingo, and horse/dog track.
  - Staff gambling or discussion of gambling in front of clients (scratch tickets in the hallway, talking about their latest trip to the casino) is not permitted
  - Betting between clients and staff members is not permitted
- **Gambling on premises:** Lottery machines or gambling opportunities on the premises are not permitted